



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Department of Health Provides Information About the Relationship Between Oral Health and Diabetes**

BISMARCK, N.D. – During American Diabetes Month (November), North Dakota's oral health and diabetes experts are joining together to present information about the effects that diabetes can have on a person's oral health and also the effects that oral health can have on diabetes.

"Diabetes and oral health have a two-fold relationship," said Kimberlie Yineman, director of the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program. "One thing that happens is that people who have diabetes are more susceptible to serious gum disease. And then, once people have serious gum disease, they also can have a harder time maintaining control of their blood glucose levels."

Serious gum disease, also called periodontal disease, is an infection of the gums and the bone that holds the teeth in place. People who don't control their diabetes can develop periodontal disease more often and more severely, and they lose teeth more often than people who have their diabetes under control.

"Gum disease is not the first thing that usually comes to mind when considering the complications of diabetes," said Sherri Paxon, director of the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Chronic Disease. "However, oral health is a critical component of living well with diabetes, and more attention should be given to keeping teeth and gums healthy."

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“Once your diabetes is out of hand, it can affect your oral health, and if you have bad oral health, it can affect your diabetes,” Yineman said. “That’s why it’s so important for people who have diabetes to take precautions like controlling their blood glucose levels, maintaining a well-balanced diet and following good oral health practices.”

Good oral health practices include:

- Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Flossing once a day.
- Visiting a dentist regularly for checkups.
- Getting professional cleanings on a regular basis.

According to Yineman, it’s possible to have the beginnings of gum disease and have only one or two warning signs. People who have diabetes should see their dentist immediately if they notice any of the following symptoms:

- Red or swollen gums
- Bleeding gums
- Persistent bad breath or bad taste in your mouth
- Painful chewing
- Loose or sensitive teeth
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth
- Any change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Any change in the fit of your dentures (false teeth)

Besides gum disease, people who have diabetes should be aware of other possible oral health problems that can occur, including:

- Tooth decay.
- Dry mouth.
- Fungal infections (thrush).
- Inflammatory skin disease (lichen planus).
- Delayed healing of infections or surgical incisions.
- Loss of taste.

“People who have diabetes who notice any symptoms in the mouth should contact their dentist,” Yineman said. “They need to communicate with their dentist about what their symptoms are, whether their disease is under control and what kinds of medications they are taking. Their dentist can help them take appropriate precautions and make appropriate decisions that will help them with both their oral health and their overall health.”

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